

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 174093

FOLLOWING REPEAT KHARTOUM 3043 ACTION STATE INFO BONN LONDON PARIS
ROME USUN NEW YORK USICA WASHDC JULY 10.

QUOTE O N F I D E N T I A L KHARTOUM 3043

DEPT PASS OAU COLLECTIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PORT, OAU, XA

SUBJ: OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS, DAY II: ATMOSPHERE TENSE

REF: KHARTOUM 3018

SUMMARY: FIRST FULL DAY OF 31ST OAU COUNCIL OF MINISTERS
(COM) BEGAN IN CONFRONTATIONAL MOOD FOLLOWING HEATED DEBATE
OF PREVIOUS EVENING, BUT APPEARED TO END IN BUSINESS-AS-
USUAL ATMOSPHERE. OPENING ROUNDS SEEMED TO ILLUSTRATE
POLARIZATION WITHIN OAU THAT MAY CHARACTERIZE DISCUSSIONS
OF MOST CONTROVERSIAL QUESTIONS ON AGENDA. THERE ALSO
APPEARS TO BE WILLINGNESS BY OAU TO AT LEAST DEBATE
SERIOUSLY THESE QUESTIONS, RATHER THAN AVOID THEM, AS HAS
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BEEN COMMON IN PAST. INITIAL TENSION OF COM SEEMS TO BE
DISSIPATING, BUT READINESS FOR CONFRONTATION IS SIMMERING
JUST BELOW SURFACE. EMD SUMMARY

1. COM RESUMED MORNING JULY 8 IN OPEN SESSION WITH
POSTPONED SPEECH BY SWAPO REPRESENTATIVE (ANTONE
CATENILLA) IN REPLY TO WELCOMING REMARKS BY SUDANESE

PRES. NIMEIRI (REFTEL). OUTGOIN COM CHAIRMAN, LIBYAN FONMIN TURAIKI, QUICKLY PROCEEDED TO RELINQUISH CHAIRMANSHIP TO SUDANESE FONMIN EL-RASHEED EL-TAHIR BAKR. THEN, RATHER THAN CONTINUING WITH ELECTING REST OF COM BUREAU (3 VICE-CHAIRMEN AND A RAPPOREUR) PER AGENDA, GABON REQUESTED RIGHT TO MAKE PUBLIC REPLY TO QUESTION OF "FOREIGN INTERVENTION" INITIATED BY LIBYA AND ZAIRE PREVIOUS EVENING. COM HAD BRIEF (20-30 MIN.) PUBLIC DEBATE ABOUT WHETHER GABON SHOULD BE ALLOWED TO MAKE PUBLIC REPLY AND DECIDED TO ADJOURN BRIEFLY AND ENTERED CLOSED SESSION. (OAU SPOKESMAN ONU LATER INFORMED PRESS THAT ALL SESSIONS WOULD BE CLOSED TO PUBLIC HEREAFTER.)

2. COM THEN RESUMED FOR 30-45 MINUTES DURING WHICH EFFORT WAS MADE TO ELECT BUREAU, BUT WITHOUT SUCCESS BECAUSE OF INABILITY OF NORTH AFRICA REGION TO SETTLE ON PERSON FOR 1ST VICE-CHAIRMAN POSITION. MORNING SESSION ENDED IN SLIGHT DISARRAY AND SOME ACRIMONY OVER NOT BEING ABLE TO EVEN CONCLUDE NON-CONTROVERSIAL BUSINESS. EVENING SESSION RECONVENED FOR NEARLY 3 HOURS AND WAS ABLE TO ELECT COM BUREAU(SEPTEL), EXPEL DELEGATION FROM COMORO ISLANDS (SEPTEL) AND HIGHLIGHT INCREASING POLARIZATION BETWEEN "RADICALS," LED BY LIBYA AND ALGERIA, ACTIVELY SUPPORTED BY GUINEA AND BENIN AMONG OTHERS, AND "MODERATES," LED BY GABON, SENEGAL, IVORY COAST AND ZAIRE.

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3. FOLLOWING PRESS REPORTS OF CONFERENCE AND SITHOLE DELEGATION EXPULSION IN WESTERN MEDIA EVENING JULY 8, RESUMED COM MORNING JULY 9, BEGAN HEATED DEBATE ON DISTORTED PRESS COVERAGE AND ON PROPRIETY OF OAU NOT HEARING FROM SITHOLE DELEGATION, DIVIDING ALONG RADICAL/MODERATE LINES ONCE AGAIN. HOWEVER, COM APPEARED TO SETTLE INTO MORE NORMAL BUSINESS ROUTINE LATER IN MORNING SESSION BY HEARING OAU SECGEN'S REPORT (AGENDA ITEM 5) AND DECIDING ON ORGANIZATION OF WORK. EVENING SESSION PROCEEDED WITHOUT ACRIMONY.

4. RESULT OF COM CRITICISM AGAINST PRESS HAS BEEN CESSATION OF ORAL PRESS BRIEFINGS BY OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN ONU, TO BE REPLACED BY MORE OR LESS DAILY COMMUNIQUE. ONU INTIMATED DURING FIRST AND ONLY PRESS BRIEFING THAT POLISARIO DELEGATION WAS PRESENT IN KHARTOUM. CONFERENCE APPEARS TO HAVE SETTLED INTO ROUTINE FOR MOMENT, ALONG LINES OF AGENDA BEGINNING WITH DECOLONIZATION AND LIBERATION COMMITTEE REPORTS MORNING JULY 10. HOWEVER, IT IS CLEAR FROM OPENING SESSIONS THAT MODERATES ARE WELL-PREPARED TO CHALLENGE RADICALS ON ALMOST ALL ISSUES OF ANY CONTROVERSY.

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